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October 24, 1999

Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)  
Food and Drug Administration  
5630 Fishers La., Rm. 1061  
Rockville, MD 20852  
RE: **Docket nos. 98N-1230, 96P-0418, and 97P-0197**

Sirs,

Every year, when egg production drops, approximately 195 million hens in North America endure a bizarre torment called forced molting. This cruel practice throws the hens' systems into collapse, stressing and shocking their worn-out bodies into laying one more batch of eggs before being sent to slaughter. The frightened birds are deprived of food for up to two weeks, water is restricted for up to eight weeks and they are kept in pitch dark for weeks on end. As a result, hundreds of thousands die while those who survive grow weak, shed all their feathers, and lose up to 35 percent of their body weight. Forced molting also weakens hens' bones, resulting in fragile, broken limbs.

Recent research, including a study conducted by U.S. government scientists, shows that forced molting can be harmful to humans as well. The studies show that forced molting increases the frequency and severity of *Salmonella enteritidis* among hens. The stressful conditions weaken their immune systems so badly that they become prone to disease and salmonella infections. The result is sick birds and contaminated eggs.

I feel that the most effective and direct way to reduce salmonella in eggs would be to eliminate the practice of forced molting and that they must do more than put warning labels on egg cartons and regulate egg refrigeration temperatures.

Thank you for your consideration of this change.

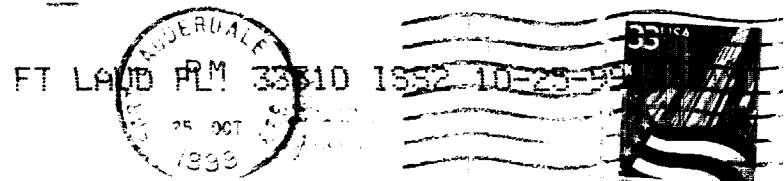
Sincerely,

  
Cynthia A. Ward

97P-0197

C777

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Docket's Management Branch  
HFA-305  
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Rockville, MD 20852

CROSS FILE SHEET

File Number:

98N-1230/ *C776*

See File Number:

97P-0197/ *C777*

96P-0418/ *C776*